



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 11, 2017

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Pallone Calls for Increased Funding to Fight Opioid Crisis

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following remarks today at the Energy and Commerce Committee Opioid Member Day, which serves as an opportunity for all members of Congress to testify before the Committee on the national opioid epidemic:*

Thank you Chairman Burgess. Today's Member Day provides us the opportunity to hear from our colleagues about how the epidemic is uniquely affecting their Districts as well as to hear their ideas of additional efforts and funding that is needed to help individuals, families, and communities affected by this crisis.

Like all communities across the country, the opioid epidemic is having devastating consequences in my home state. Drug overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death in New Jersey. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there was a 16 percent increase in drug overdose deaths in New Jersey between 2014 and 2015. Last year, drug overdose deaths topped more than 2,000. And unfortunately, we are continuing to see increased deaths from this tragic epidemic.

I am proud of steps this Committee has taken to respond to this tragic epidemic that is taking the lives of 91 Americans every day. I am pleased that we worked together in a bipartisan fashion to pass the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA). We also worked together to create the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis grant program as part of the 21st Century CURES Act. This grant program provides \$1 billion to states to address the opioid epidemic.

These were positive and bipartisan laws that we produced in 2016 during the last year of the Obama Administration. That was 2016 – 2017 has been much different. Congressional Republicans have spent much of this year trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which would have prevented millions of Americans from getting the help that they need to treat opioid use disorders.

The repeal legislation passed here in the House would have allowed insurers to once again discriminate against people with preexisting conditions, such as opioid use disorders. The

Republican passed bill would also have allowed states to waive essential health benefits, including mental health and substance use treatment. Thankfully, repeal efforts have failed to date.

As we move forward, what's clear is that individuals with substance use disorder, their families, and their communities need us to work together to do more. Despite some progress here in Washington, the epidemic has shown no signs of relenting. That is why we must continue to support and increase funding for proven public health approaches spanning the entire spectrum from crisis to recovery, including expanding access to medication-assisted treatment. Those efforts should include more funding. We should extend the State Targeting Response to the Opioid Crisis grant program so that we expand even further people's access to opioid abuse treatment, prevention, and recovery support services.

I look forward to hearing from my House colleagues and continuing to work together in a bipartisan fashion to help our country respond to this crisis.

I yield back.

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